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ABSTRACT

A comparative study of higher education for older adults was conducted using data from two surveys in the United States and one in Japan. The U.S. surveys, one of 200 higher education institutions in the country (69 percent response) in 1986 and a 1990 survey of all 308 higher education institutions in California (50 percent response) had the following findings: (1) hundreds of older students are studying in many two-year and four-year institutions; (2) older people have opportunities to study in many types of programs; (3) many institutions have tuition-reduction programs for older students; (4) many colleges have special programs for older adults; and (5) more funding for these programs is needed. In Japan, a 1987 study of 320 four-year universities (248 responses) showed that only 10 older students were admitted to the universities that year, that only 8 universities had special programs for older adults, and that about 10,000 older persons attended extension lectures. Factors affecting the participation of older adults in higher education include the development and expansion of learning opportunities in the United States, demographic changes, sociocultural factors, and institutional barriers. The study concluded that higher education institutions in the United States have been much more active in meeting the educational needs of older adults than have those in Japan. (26 references; 9 figures; 3 tables) (KC)

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HIGHER EDUCATION AND OLDER PEOPLE: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

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(March 23, 1990)

- A paper presented to the 1990 CIES Conference -

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I. INTRODUCTION

Education for older people in higher education institutions is one of the unexplored fields both in Japan and the United States. Though a noticeable number of studies on higher education for older people have been published, most of them have narrowly focused either on programming for older people or on pedagogical problems in teaching older students. Even surveys on the learning of older students have rarely been conducted in the past years, and it is not clear how universities and colleges have facilitated education for older people and how older students have been studying there.

> Though OLDER PEOPLE is defined as those over 65 in most international data, the use of the term varies depending upon issues and situations. According to the literature, for example, "OLDER PEOPLE" refers to those who are perceived by others as old and subtly discriminated against or especially taken care of." (D. A. Peterson, 1983) In my surveys, I generally asked about those over 55.

Recently I initiated two surveys on the education of older adults in higher education institutions in the United States. The first survey was done in 1986 for 200 selected institutions in order to make clear how education for older people has been facilitated in American colleges and universities. The second one was initiated early this year to obtain a certain quantitative data from all 308 higher education institutions in California.

Corresponding to my survey, one Japanese professor (A. Ohashi) conducted a similar fact-finding survey in Japan in 1987. She sent a questionnaire to 320 Japanese four-year universities. Though her

survey covers fewer questions, it includes various comparable data with mine.

Using these latest data, I would like to make clear how higher education institutions have facilitated education for older adults in Japan and the United States, and also to examine various factors which would have been affecting the development and expansion of opportunities for higher learning for older people in two different societies.

II. THE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER ADULTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE UNITED STATES

In order to examine the actual situation of older learners in the collegiate education in the United States, I conducted a preliminary survey in 1986. Sampled in the survey were 200 higher education institutions in the United States, most of which were selected from the 1985 edition of THE NATIONAL DIRECTORY OF EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN GERONTOLOGY. Out of 200, 138 institutions (69%) responded to the questionnaire. The first half of the questionnaire asked about learning opportunities for older people in the general collegiate programs; while the latter half asked about special educational programs for older people offered at the institution. Among 138 institutions, 95 institutions completed the latter half.

The collected data provided us various information about the current situations of older students in American colleges and universities, but they were not useful to know institutional

differences. Another drawback was that, since the institutions surveyed were selected from those which had facilitated some educational programs in gerontology, two-year colleges, which usually have more adult enrolees, were very poorly sampled. Thus, I initiated another survey early this year covering all 308 higher education institutions in California. Major questions in the survey were: enrollments of older students; special admission policies; financial or other incentive provisions or services; special educational programs for older adults; the number of professionals and staff; major subject areas and instructional methods; needs assessment and recruiting participants; and problems or obstacles to the growth of the programs. To date, 154 institutions (50%) have returned their responses.

The major findings in these two surveys will be summarized as follows:

1) Hundreds of older students are learning in many two-year public instituions. Most of the private institutions, though they are smaller in size, also accept a certain number of older students. (Figure 1)

2) Older people in the United States can have opportunities for study in both traditional and non-traditional types of programs.

3) Many institutions have a tuition reduction policy or the like for older students. Needless to say, the ratio is less with private institutions than with public institutions.

4) Some institutions have special admission policies for older applicants. They exempt SAT or entry test, give credit for life experiences, or simplify procedures. One in 3 to 4 institutions have administrative, educational, or other types of services which would help older students continue to study at colleges or universities.

5) Many institutions allow older people to audit the regular classes with free or reduced tuition. Most of them, however, accept auditors only on a space-available basis, and with the instructor's permission.

6) Most of the special educational programs for older adults offered at colleges and universities are non-credit short courses. The major subject areas of the program are academic collegiate subjects, health related subjects, aesthetic appreciation, world affairs and current topics, hobby and recreational subjects, and the like.

7) As for the participants in special educational programs for older people, the female and male ratio is about 6 to 4. Most of the participants are healthy and have few financial problems. They are also very well educated. (Figures 2-7)

8) It is also evident that most of the program providers have been suffering from shortage of financial resources. If they had to raise the cost to participants, it would become harder to recruit economically and educationally disadvantaged people. This seems to be one of the most serious distressing problems which program facilitators are presently facing in the United States.

III. THE LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER ADULTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN JAPAN

Though it was difficult to obtain comparable data in Japan, Ohashi conducted a survey in 1987 covering 320 four-year universities (866 departments), among which 76 institutions had been interested in special admission policies for adult students and 307 institutions had

been offering university extension lectures. She collected responses from a total of 626 departments in 248 universities.

> ADULT STUDENTS here means the persons who entered the work force upon graduating from high schools or comparable institutions, and who then come back to higher educational programs after a certain period.

According to her, programs in which older people can participate are university extension lectures or some undergraduate or graduate courses which accept auditors. As regular students, only 10 older students (55+) were admitted to the universities in 1987. Though the figures can not be comparable with those in the United States, 17 departments (2.7%) had special admission policies for older applicants, and 8 departments (1.2%) had some tuition reduction policies for older students. Other incentive provisions and services for older students are almost none in any institutions. (Table 1)

According to another report written by a research group of Tsukuba University (1986), out of 372 departments surveyed, only eight had some special admission policies for adult students. Regarding auditing opportunities, most of the institutions said "Yes," but those departments which have been active in accepting adult auditors were only 3.8 percent among them. In both cases, responses from municipal or prefectural universities and newer universities were more favorable for adult auditors.

As for university extension lectures, Ohashi reports that at least 724 such lectures were held in 1987 with 140,967 participants. (The female and male ratio is about 1 to 2.) About 10,000 older people (55+) attended such lectures. They mostly favored general culture programs. Other areas in which they were interested are health and medical issues, job training, hobby and recreational subjects, and world affairs and current topics.

As major problems in implementing special educational programs for older adults, many institutions listed such problems as, no trained staff or instructors, lack of interest within the institution, inadequate facilities, and difficulty in recruiting participants. These responses are very different from those in the United States.

IV. FACTORS AFFECTING THE DEVELOPMENT AND EXPANSION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES FOR OLDER ADULTS IN COLLEGIATE EDUCATION: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

(1) The Expansion of Higher Education

The expansion of higher education in the past decades was remarkable in many countries. It is one of the major factors for the expansion of the opportunities of higher learning for older people in the United States. According to the literature, "Toward mid 70's, significant educational programs for older people had been developing across the country." (D.A. Peterson, 1975) And thus, "Even among higher education institutions, though the university had not responded to the needs of older people traditionally, because of its inherent youth and occupational orientation, it has become more responsive to the educational needs of older people because of enrollment decline, financial difficulties, and the notion that education has an obligation to educate older people." (H.C. Covoy, 1981) It is reported that an estimated 1.7 million Americans over age 55 were pursuing higher education in 1979, and that nearly half of the

institutions had a policy of reduction or waiver of tuition for older students. (R. E. Peterson, et al., 1982)

In contrast, in Japan, where the expansion of higher education has been much more remarkable during these years, adult students enrolled in collegiate programs have remained few in number, not to speak of older students. For example, adult students enrolled in Japanese universities and junior colleges were 11,329 (less than 2 percent of total enrollments) in 1981. (M. Yano, 1982) Why has the expansion of higher education in Japan little increased adult enrollments? It is partly because current college entrance examinations are intended mainly to test the knowledge which has been acquired in secondary schools, and also because the extremely severe competition in entrance examination requires students to absorb themselves in preparatory study for a considerable periods of time. Therefore, even should no university set an age limit for admission, older applicants would have various disadvantages. Besides, the traditional belief that collegiate education is for the youth has been so strong that few older adults dare to challenge an entrance examination.

(2) Demographic Changes

As shown in Figure 8, the older population has continuously been increasing in many industrialized countries in the past decades. It is remarkable, however, that the proportion of the aged population of Japan has been increasing very sharply among other countries. (Also see Figure 9.) Undoubtedly such demographic changes have been a main force in the initiation of educational programs for older people in Japan. However, most of such programs were community-centered local programs as represented by the Classes for the Elderly. It was even

rare for older people to participate in other intergenerational educational programs.

On the other hand, in the United States, where the increase of the proportion of the aged has been mitigated by the influx of the younger immigrants (Figure 10), not only the increase of older population, but other changes and movements, such as the growing demands for the equal opportunity in education and the expansion of adult education, seem to be closely related to the development of education of older people. Thus, educational opportunities for older Americans have been available in various places including universities and colleges, adult schools, community centers and senior citizens' centers, and churches and synagogues.

(3) Socio-cultural Factors

As stated in the literature, higher educational attainment seems to be significantly correlated with higher learning aspiration. Comparing the educational level of older persons in Japan and the United States, we notice that there is a great gap between two countries. (Table 2) Among Japanese elderly, however, owing to the early enforcement of compulsory education, comparatively higher and respected status of older people in the community and social life, and their highly homogeneous pattern of life, their actual intellectual levels are considered to be fairly standardized.

In addition, since more older people live with their sons and daughters, or grandchildren in Japan than their American cohorts, they may have more interactions with the younger generation in their daily life. (Table 3) On the other hand, it is also true that Japanese older people have less free time to spend for their study or social activities, since they would do some domestic work or take care of

grandchildren by living together with their son's or daughter's even after retirement.

In such circumstances, even the participants in educational programs are likely to be recruited through the traditional community units in Japan. In contrast, as far as I have observed here, participants in the United States are strongly individually oriented, and likely to participate in various types of activities and programs, irrespective of the community boundaries.

(4) Institutional Barriers

Regarding the composition of students in higher education, the enrollment is more fixed by age in Japan than in other industrialized countries. (J. H. Van de Graaff, et al., 1978) Most of the Japanese higher education institutions seem to have merely been concerned with the development or expansion of the established system. It can be said that, while older students are disadvantaged by the traditional entrance examination system, they will neither be given much merit by studying in the traditional instructional setting, methods, or curriculum. According to the survey, few Japanese higher education institutions have provided administrative, educational, or other types of services which would help older students continue to study at colleges or universities.

On the other hand, such a situation may explain why some alternative programs for higher learning for older people have been expanding outside the traditional higher education systems in Japan. For example, Inamino Gakuen in Hyogo Prefecture, Setagaya Seniors' College in Tokyo, and other similar types of programs have been initiated by local governments as one of the community projects.

V. CONCLUSION

Educational opportunities for older people have gradually been expanding in the United States. It is identified that some American higher education institutions have been making efforts to expand educational opportunities for older people by a flexible application of the existing admission policies or some other incentive measures. For them, to secure financial resources seems to be the most serious problem at present. In contrast, the need for the education of older adults has rarely been met by the traditional higher education systems in Japan. College education is not easily accessible even to young adults, once they have entered the work force, not to speak of older adults. Only very recently, a few universities have become concerned with new clientele. In order to meet the needs of the diversified clientele, the institution should drastically innovate its administrative procedures, educational provisions, staffing, facilities, and instructional methods, in cooperation with other institutions.

We have also examined that the development and expansion of opportunities for higher learning for older adults have been negatively or positively affected by the trends of expansion of higher education, demographic changes, social beliefs and traditions, and the system of higher education of that country. Implications from an international comparative study will be very useful for further development of the education of older people.

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- The 1990 CIES Conference -

HIGHER EDUCATION AND OLDER PEOPLE: COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVES ON JAPAN AND THE UNITED STATES

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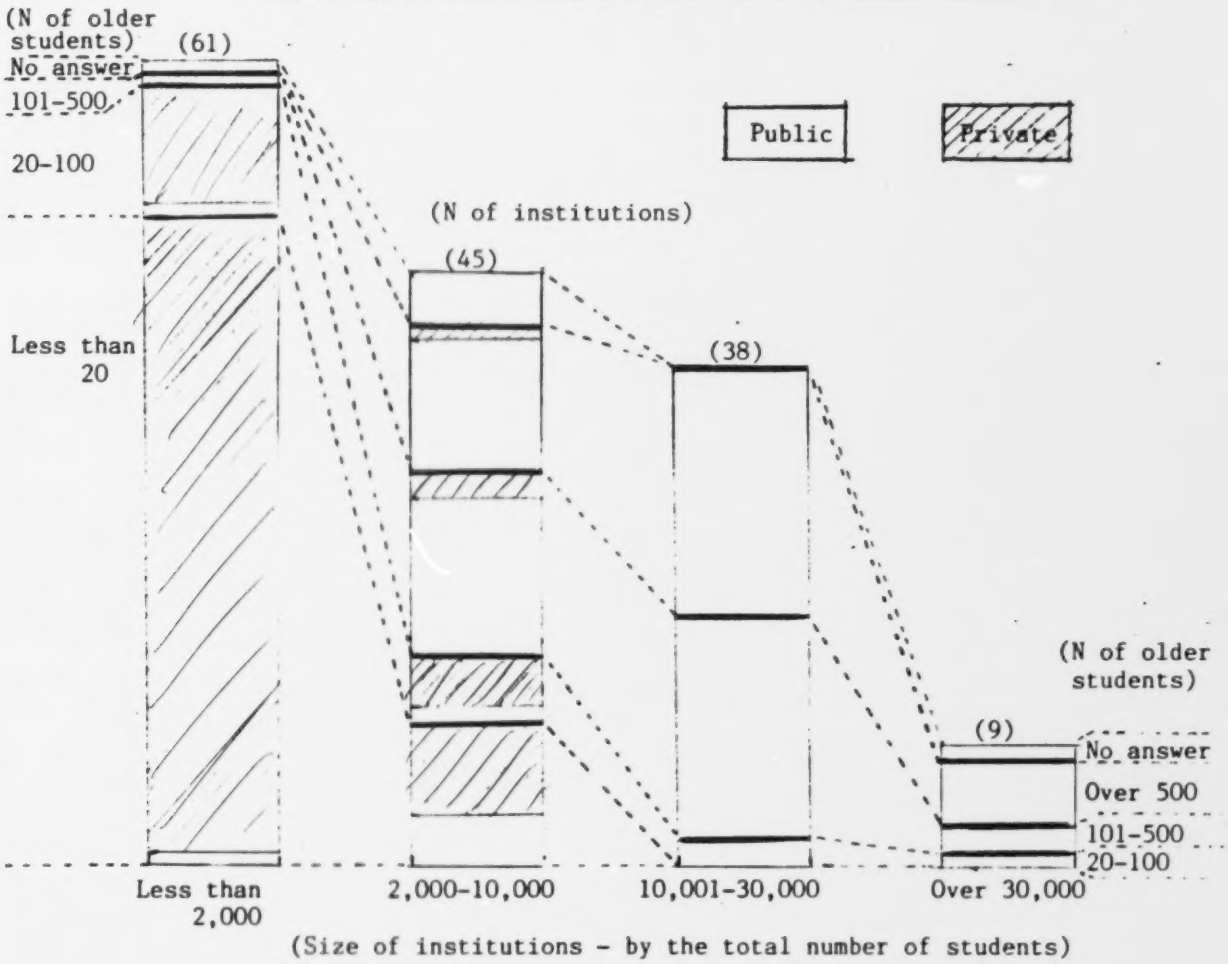
(March 23, 1990)

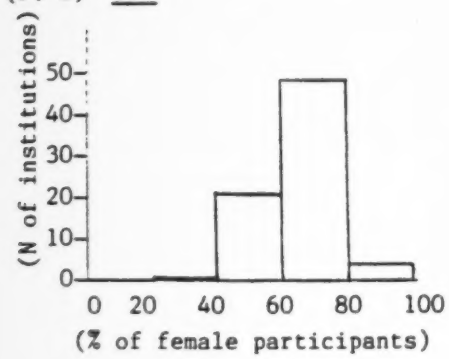
(Figure 1) Number of Older Students by Size & Control of Higher Education Institutions in California (1990)



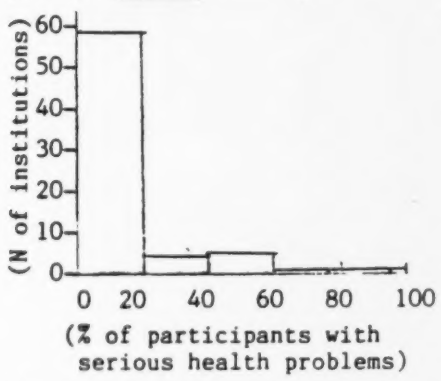
The figure 1 shows the relationships of the size and control of institutions and the number of older students (55+) enrolled in 154 higher education institutions in California.

(Figures 2 - 7) Participants of the Special Educational Programs for Older Adults in Higher Education Institutions (1986 US survey)

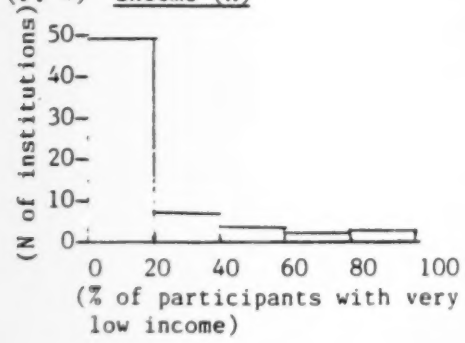
(F. 2) Sex



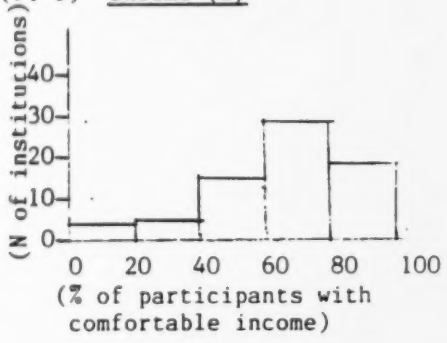
(F. 3) Health



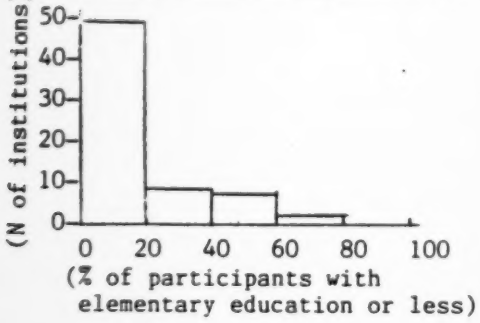
(F. 4) Income (A)



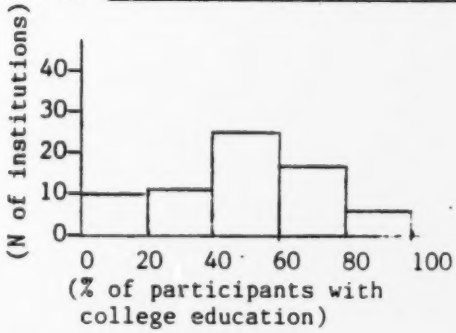
(F. 5) Income (B)



(F. 6) Educational Background (A)



(F. 7) Educational Background (B)



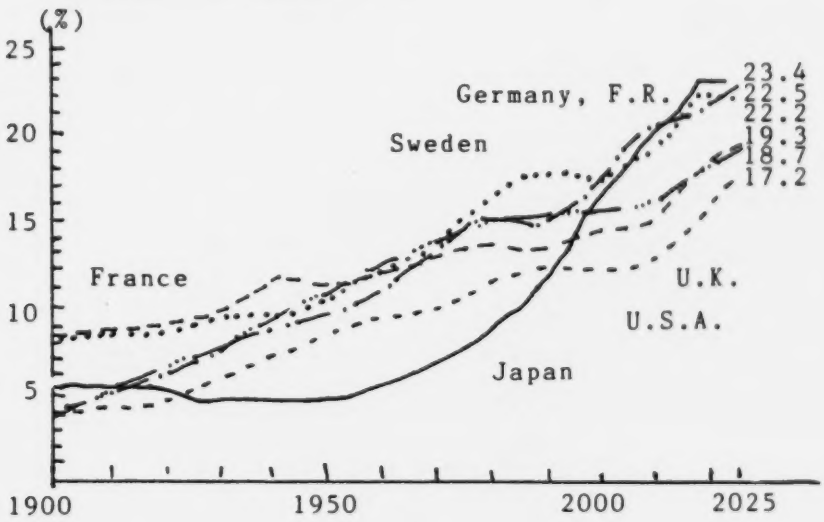
The numbers of institutions that responded to each question are: (F.2)=74; (F.3)=69; (F.4)=64; (F.5)=72; (F.6)=66; and (F.7)=69.

(Table 1) Older Students in Japanese Universities and the Related Data (1987)

	National University	Municipal/ Prefectural University	Private University	Total
N of universities responded	66	20	162	248
N of older students(55+) admitted to the university	3	1	6	10
N of departments responded	198	46	382	626(100%)
Having special admission policies for older applicants	1	3	13	17(2.7%)
Having a tuition reduction policy for older students	2	1	5	8(1.2%)
Having special facilities for older students	0	0	1	1(0.1%)

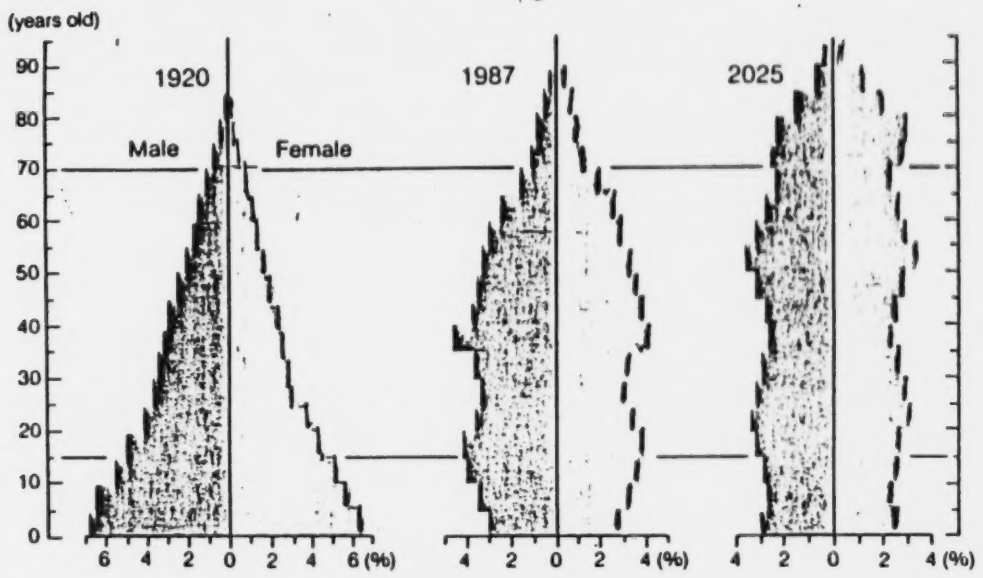
These data were provided by A. Ohashi.

(Figure 8) Persons 65 Years Old and Over: Percent of Total Population (1900-2025)



Source: Japan Institute for Social and Economic Affairs, Japan 1989: An International Comparison

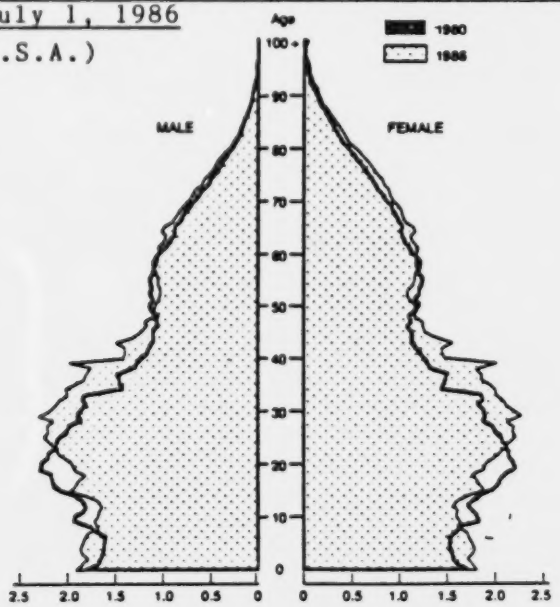
(Figure 9) Japan's Population Pyramid (1920-2025)



Source: Japan Institute for Social and Economic Affairs (Ed.). Japan 1989: An International Comparison. Tokyo, 1988. p. 8.

(Figure 10) Distribution of the Total Population Including Armed Forces Overseas, by Age and Sex: April 1980, and July 1, 1986

(U.S.A.)



Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. "Estimates of the Population of the United States, by Age, Sex, and Race: 1980 to 1986." Series P-25, No.1000

(Table 2) What was your last grade or class you completed in school? (Answers by the persons 65+)

	Japan (n=1,221)	USA (n=1,000)
Primary education	67.6(%)	22.7(%)
Secondary education	22.9	38.7
Higher education	7.8	35.7
Did not go to school at all	1.0	0.0
(No answer)	0.7	2.9

Source: Office of Prime Minister (Japan). Life and Thoughts of the Aged, 1982.

(Table 3) Who lives in the same household with you?

(Multiple answers by the persons 65 years and over)

	Japan (n=1,221)	USA (n=1,000)
Your spouse	65.4(%)	47.0(%)
Married son	41.0	0.9
Married daughter	9.2	2.5
Spouse of son/daughter	34.0	1.6
Unmarried son/daughter	18.7	9.0
Grandson/granddaughter	41.0	3.8
Other relative(s)	2.9	4.1
Someone other than relatives	0.7	2.3
No one, live alone	5.7	41.3
(No answer)	0.3	0.3

Source: Same as Table 2.